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Book Reviews

Homer and His Age. By ANDREW LANG. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1906. Pp. x+336.

"The aim of this book is to prove that the Homeric Epics, as wholes, and apart from passages gravely suspected in antiquity, present a perfectly harmonious picture of the entire life and civilisation of one single age"—therefore, of one single poet. This, the thesis of another of Mr. Lang's books, reflects his customary candor and directness of statement. The work is an interesting, good-humored, and learned aggregation of arguments, but in no sense a well-ordered, convincing book. One must read it in order to appreciate in full measure the discursiveness, the repetitions, the illogical arrangement, the startling, Hugoesque paragraphing of single lines, into which the pen of this ready writer has betrayed him. An excellent and entirely new argument for the early date of Book xix—The Reconciliation—is drawn from the practice of feudalism, only to be weakened, as we think, by repetition at too great length in another chapter and context.

The two ogres that Mr. Lang attacks are the notion that epic bards indulged in conscious archaizing, and the belief in a Pisistratean recension of the poems. The two propositions, as stated by Mr. Lang, are easily refuted. But as to the first, no one believes that the later generations of poets archaized consciously. Whether or not there was a "school" of epic poets, for which Mr. Lang thinks there is no evidence, there certainly were many epic poets, and the desire to put things in what was to them a natural way would lead them to change something here or preserve something there;¹ and being the natural way (to them), it would be unconscious. As regards the editing of the poems in the sixth century B. C., the reaction against the disbelief in the tradition about Solon or Pisistratus is one of the signs of the healthy conservative criticism of the last fifteen years, and Mr. Lang, we think, does wrong in reviving the old scare about the Pisistratus "legend."

Mr. Lang believes that the *Iliad* was written down by its single author—"the man with the book"²—in an age of writing, not necessarily an age of reading; and that the idea expounded by Croiset (who is not mentioned) that only shorter lays would have found a popular audience, applies to the later age of the rhapsodists "reciting to a civic crowd. . . . They were limited in time and gave but snatches of poetry." He seems to have forgotten Book viii of the *Odyssey* where Demodocus—no rhapsodist at all, before a princely court—sings three different lays, all of them short.

¹ On Greek conservatism in literature see H. W. Smyth in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*, XVII, 49 ff.

² This theme, with an intention wholly different from Mr. Lang's, is expanded with fine imagination by Gilbert Murray in his *Rise of the Greek Epic* (1907).

As might be expected, Mr. Lang's discussion brings him to the same assumption that the critics whom he opposes have made: "that it [the *Iliad*] has reached us without interpolation and lacunae and *remaniements* perhaps no person of ordinary sense will allege." On the archaeological side, Mr. Lang admits sadly that we have no actual cairn remains wherewith to illustrate Homeric burial, and no Mycenaean corslet to prove his contention that the corslet and the Mycenaean shield might both be used by the same warrior. So also, in philological matters, he must assume that "things could drop out of the *Iliad*, causing lacunae."

This brief review does not do justice to some useful features, and the teacher of Homer will do well to read the book, if only to be reminded of the value of the comparative study of the epic; the futility, in the present state of archaeology, of trying to discover strata on the lines followed by Reichel and Robert; and the importance of writing as a factor in the transmission of the epic, even in the early stages of its growth. We only regret that the book lacks coherence. That it was hastily prepared seems to be indicated by the numerous and distressing misprints.

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The Tragedies of Seneca. Translated into English Verse by FRANK JUSTUS MILLER. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1907. Pp. 534. \$3.00 net; \$3.20 postpaid.

One of the noteworthy features of modern classical learning is the renewed study of the tragedies of Seneca. He has not, of course, recovered the position he held at the Renaissance, when he was the accepted model of tragedy for all Europe, and so eminent a critic as Julius Caesar Scaliger could write: *Senecam nullo Graecorum maiestatem inferiorem existimo, cultu vero ac nitore, etiam Euripide maiorem*. He is now studied as the representative of his age, and more especially as one of the forces in the development of modern tragedy. This is doubtless the explanation of the fact that the English translation of 1581, left for three centuries without a successor, has been followed by no less than three versions within the last six years. In these days when so many students of modern literature are (without Shakspeare's excuse) in the position of having "small Latin and less Greek," it is important that an author of such wide-reaching influence should be adequately translated, and Dr. Miller's version is therefore a welcome addition to the equipment of the modern scholar who has made the mistake of neglecting the classical languages in his youth. Yet it would be idle to pretend that Dr. Miller has succeeded in conveying the full force of the original. Seneca's broader characteristics—his elaboration of horrors, his preference of striking situations to artistic unity, his reduction of the persons of Greek tragedy to exaggerated types, his fondness for rhetorical commonplaces—are evident in any translation which has the primary merit of faithfulness; but his more subtle peculiarities—the brilliant thrust and parry of his dialogue and the cold, hard